

Message Text

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TAGS: PGOV, FR
SUBJECT: US GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: FRANCE 1978

REF: STATE 291277, STATE 296053

I. WHERE WE ARE

1. THE FOLLOWING DESCRIPTION OF EMBASSY APPROACHES TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF US GOALS AND OBJECTIVES SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS PART OF A BROADER INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT THAN US-FRENCH BILATERAL RELATIONS. OUR MAJOR GOALS AND OBJECTIVES HAVE TO BE STATED IN GLOBAL AND EUROPEAN TERMS. IT IS WITH REFERENCE TO SUCH GOALS THAT THE EMBASSY'S APPROACHES MUST BE TAILORED TO PECULIAR FRENCH CONDITIONS, CONDITIONS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO REMAIN UNSTABLE OVER THE COMING YEAR, REGARDLESS OF THE OUTCOME OF THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS.

2. US RELATIONS WITH FRANCE ARE TODAY BETTER THAN AT ANY POINT SINCE THE PRE-1958 PERIOD. PRESIDENT CARTER'S VISIT PUT A CAPSTONE ON THE WARMING TREND
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WHICH HAD BEEN IN EVIDENCE SINCE 1974. IN ALL FIVE OF THE MAJOR CATEGORIES OF US GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, THERE HAS BEEN SOME RECENT PROGRESS:

A. UNDER GISCARD, FRANCE HAS MAINTAINED ITS DEMOCRATIC CHARACTER AND A HIGH DEGREE OF COOPERATION WITHIN A WESTERN FRAMEWORK: IN THE EC, IN THE

ALLIANCE, QUADRIPARTITE MEETINGS, AND GENERALLY IN INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

B. ON MULTILATERAL ISSUES, WE HAVE MANAGED TO NUDGE THE FRENCH IN OUR DIRECTION ON NON-PROLIFERATION. HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HAD BEEN A NEURALGIC BILATERAL ISSUE SIX MONTHS AGO, IS NO LONGER DIVISIVE (THOUGH THE FRENCH CONTINUE TO HAVE QUALMS ABOUT CERTAIN ASPECTS OF OUR OPERATIONAL TACTICS.)

C. GIVEN INTERNAL PRESSURES AND THE CONTINUING FRENCH COMMITMENT TO AN INDEPENDENT POSITION, FRENCH DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH NATO AND THE US IS SATISFACTORY THOUGH NOT AS GOOD AS COULD BE HOPED FOR IN SUCH AREAS AS NUCLEAR-POWERED-WARSHIP VISITS. CONSULTATION ON DISARMAMENT IN GENERAL AND SALT IN PARTICULAR HAS BEEN CLOSE; WHILE THE FRENCH HAVE SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT OUR APPROACHES (E.G. ON SALT, MBFR AND CTB), THEY HAVE NOT BEEN DISRUPTIVE.

D. THE VOLUME OF CONSULTATION WITH THE FRENCH ON EUROPEAN AND EXTRA-EUROPEAN PROBLEMS HAS INCREASED, AND ON SOME - E.G., THE HORN, NAMIBIA, ASPECTS OF CSCE - THERE IS FAIRLY TIGHT POLICY COORDINATION. AS AN ALLY FRANCE IS BEGINNING TO OCCUPY AN INTERLOCUTOR ROLE LIKE THE UK'S TRADITIONAL

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ONE, AND IS ALERT TO WAYS TO SEEK THE USE OF US POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND MILITARY POWER TO ENDS IT FAVORS.

E. ON ECONOMIC ISSUES, DESPITE SOME SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES (PARTICULARLY OVER TRADE POLICY), THE IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT AND EMOTIONAL RHETORIC THAT MARKED THE DE GAULLE AND POMPIDOU YEARS HAS SUBSIDED AND WE APPEAR TO BE ABLE TO FIND WAYS TO QUIETLY AGREE ON TACTICAL SOLUTIONS.

3. THE MISSION HAS USED THIS FAIR WIND IN BILATERAL

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RELATIONS TO CONSOLIDATE CONSULTATIONS AND CONTACTS
THROUGHOUT THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT AND SOCIETY, TO
EXPLAIN AND LOBBY FOR US POSITIONS, AND TO INCREASE
OUR LINES INTO THE MAJOR POLITICAL FORCES IN THE
COUNTRY. WE HAVE GIVEN SPECIAL PRIORITY TO TIES
WITH THE FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY, WHICH IS AT THE
LEAST LIKELY TO EMERGE FROM THE MARCH ELECTIONS AS
THE LARGEST PARTY IN FRANCE. THE CARTER-
MITTERRAND MEETING WAS IMPORTANT IN DEMONSTRATING
US OPENNESS TO CONTACT WITH DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVES
TO THE PRESENT GOVERNING COALITION WHILE AT THE
SAME TIME UNDERLINING US CONCERNS ABOUT A GOVERNMENT
LINKED TO THE COMMUNIST PARTY - THEMES WHICH THE
EMBASSY HAS STRESSED IN ITS CONTACTS WITH SOCIALISTS.
WE HAVE ALSO EMPHASIZED CONTACTS WITH THE RPR
(GAULLIST) PARTY BECAUSE OF ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE
GOVERNING MAJORITY COALITION; THE ABSENCE OF A
CARTER-CHIRAC MEETING MAY COMPLICATE THIS TASK,
THOUGH WE BELIEVE NOT SERIOUSLY.

II. WHERE WE'RE GOING

4. THE MARCH ELECTIONS OF COURSE DEFINE THE RANGE
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OF IMPONDERABLE THAT COULD AFFECT THE ACCOMPLISHMENT
OF US OBJECTIVES OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. A
VICTORY FOR THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT COALITION WOULD
RAISE THE FEWEST BILATERAL PROBLEMS, BUT SUCH A
VICTORY IS NEITHER ASSURED NOR - IF IT HAPPENED -
LIKELY TO LEAD NECESSARILY TO A STABLE POLITICAL OR
SOCIAL SITUATION. IN FACT, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL

UNREST WOULD PROBABLY FOLLOW A DEFEAT OF THE LEFT. A VICTORY FOR THE LEFT WOULD RAISE IMMEDIATE AND SERIOUS PROBLEMS FOR THE US, PARTICULARLY IF A LEFT GOVERNMENT CONTAINED COMMUNISTS. GIVEN THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY'S ORGANIZING SKILLS - NOW EVIDENT IN ITS TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING THE ONE-OUT-OF-EVERY-THREE FRENCH CITIES IT NOW CONTROLS - THERE IS NO PRIMA FACIE REASON FOR BELIEVING SOCIALIST LEADER MITTERRAND WHEN HE SAYS HE CAN KEEP THE COMMUNISTS IN LINE.

5. WHILE THE PICTURE IS UNCLEAR AT THIS WRITING, THE CURRENT WEAKENING OF THE FRANC SUGGESTS THAT ECONOMIC FORCES ARE AT WORK WHICH COULD BRING ABOUT SERIOUS DIFFICULTIES IF THE LEFT PROGRAM CONTINUES TO BE SEEN AS A REAL PROSPECT. THEREFORE, A NEW GOVERNMENT COULD BE FACED WITH A SITUATION WHERE A SYSTEM OF RIGID EXCHANGE CONTROLS, CONTROLS ON CAPITAL MOVEMENTS, AND OTHER MEASURES POSSIBLY INCLUDING TRADE RESTRICTIONS ARE IN PLACE OR NECESSARY. DEVELOPMENTS ARE DIFFICULT TO PREDICT, BUT THE PRESENT FINANCIAL SITUATION IS CLEARLY FRAGILE. WHATEVER THE ECONOMIC SITUATION, A LEFT GOVERNMENT EMERGING FROM THE ELECTIONS - WHETHER IT CONTAINED COMMUNISTS OR NOT - WOULD BE LIKELY TO PRODUCE A HIGHLY UNSTABLE PERIOD IN FRANCE. FOR THE FIRST
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TIME IN THE CURRENT GAULLIST CONSTITUTION, A PRESIDENT AND PRIME MINISTER - WHOSE RELATIVE POWERS ARE NOT WELL-DEFINED IN ANY CASE - WOULD BE COMPETING FOR POLITICAL POWER ACROSS A GULF OF DIFFERENCES ON MAJOR POLICY ISSUES. THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THAT A SOCIALIST-COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT COULD HOLD TOGETHER FOR LONG, GIVEN THE TWO PARTIES' MUTUAL ANTIPATHIES. NOR WOULD A HOMOGENEOUS SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT NECESSARILY BE ANY LONGER-LIVED, SINCE ITS PARLIAMENTARY SUPPORT FROM EITHER LEFT OR RIGHT WOULD BE FRAGILE AND SINCE THE PCF WOULD PROBABLY BE LOOKING FOR WAYS TO BRING IT DOWN. IT SEEMS LIKELY, THEN, THAT A LEFT GOVERNMENT WOULD BREAK UP FAIRLY SOON (MOST PROBABLY BECAUSE OF PS AND PCF INCOMPATIBILITIES) AND/OR THAT GISCARD WOULD SEEK AN EARLY OPPORTUNITY TO DISSOLVE THE ASSEMBLY. THUS, FRANCE COULD FACE A SECOND SET OF ELECTIONS WITHIN A YEAR OF THE MARCH ELECTIONS. IN ANY CASE - AND REGARDLESS OF THE ELECTION OUTCOME - WE ARE LIKELY TO SEE INCREASED JOCKEYING FOR POSITION IN ANTICIPATION OF THE 1981 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.

III. KEY POLICY ISSUES FACING THE US

6. AGAINST THIS BACKGROUND OF EXTREME UNCERTAINTY
IT IS NOT EASY TO PREDICT THE SHAPE WHICH POLICY
ISSUES WILL TAKE OVER THE NEXT SEVERAL YEARS. AS A
GENERAL PROPOSITION, WITH A GOVERNMENT OF THE CURRENT

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MAJORITY (ASSUMING IT IS NOT CONTROLLED BY RIGHT-
WING GAULLISTS), WE WOULD BE ABLE TO DEAL WITH THE
ISSUES - AS WE HAVE BEEN DOING - IN AN ATMOSPHERE
OF COOPERATION AND SHARED VALUES, DESPITE THE LIKE-
LIHOOD THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE WEAK AND PRE-
OCCUPIED WITH PROTECTING ITS DOMESTIC FLANKS. WITH
A GOVERNMENT OF THE LEFT, WE COULD NOT COUNT ON A
POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE; INDEED, AT THE OUTSET, IT
WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY BE ABSENT. IN THE ABSENCE
OF CAREFUL HANDLING THE GROWTH OF AN IDEOLOGICALLY-
BASED, US-TARGETTED FRENCH NATIONALISM WOULD BE A
DISTINCT POSSIBILITY.

7. ON SPECIFICS, THE EMERGENCE OF A LEFT GOVERNMENT
WOULD RAISE ISSUES WHICH WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN SERIOUS
PROBLEMS WITH A GOVERNMENT OF THE CURRENT COALITION
AND WHICH COULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT ON THE CURRENT
FAIRLY COMFORTABLE BILATERAL CONSENSUS ON THE MAJOR
ISSUES BETWEEN THE US AND WESTERN EUROPE. THE LIMITED
BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL COOPERATION ON DEFENSE

THAT EXISTS TODAY WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO
MAINTAIN, AND NOT POSSIBLE IF COMMUNIST MINISTERS
WERE ADMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT. EAST-WEST ISSUES
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WOULD BECOME ABRASIVE IF THE LEFT TOOK A MORE
BENIGN ATTITUDE TOWARD SOVIET EXTERNAL BEHAVIOR
AND MOVED TOWARD A PUBLIC EVEN-HANDEDNESS BORDERING
ON NEUTRALISM. DESPITE THE LONG-STANDING PS
COMMITMENT TO THE EC, THE POLICIES OF A LEFT
GOVERNMENT, WHETHER BY DESIGN OR PERCEIVED NECESSITY,
COULD WEAKEN THE EC'S ECONOMIC UNITY AS WELL AS ITS
VIABILITY AS A FRAMEWORK FOR FRANCE'S POLITICAL
RELATIONS WITH HER NEIGHBORS; LEFT POLICES COULD
ALSO COMPLICATE OUR RELATIONS WITH THE EC IN AREAS
(E.G. TRADE) WHERE IT HAS A SPECIFIC COMPETENCE.
FOUR-POWER CONSULTATIONS, NOW CARRIED OUT ON A
RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL ISSUES, COULD GROW MORE
CIRCUMSCRIBED AND LESS USEFUL IF THE ELEMENT OF
MUTUAL TRUST WERE REDUCED. OUR COOPERATIVE DIA-
LOGUE WITH THE FRENCH ON MACROECONOMIC POLICY AND
INTERNATIONAL MONETARY PROBLEMS COULD QUICKLY
DETERIORATE IF A LEFT GOVERNMENT THROUGH IMPLEMENTATION
OF ITS INFLATIONARY PROGRAM THEN FOUND IT NECESSARY
TO APPLY ECONOMIC CONTROLS AT THE FRONTIER.
WE MIGHT HAVE TO DEAL WITH A PLETHORA OF VAGUE,
UNSOUND AND RATHER NEUTRALIST DISARMAMENT PROPOSALS
FROM THE FRENCH. FRENCH RELATIONS WITH THE FRG -
A LINCHPIN OF EUROPEAN SECURITY - COULD BECOME UN-
SETTLED, AS MUCH BECAUSE OF REACTION IN THE FRG AS
BECAUSE OF ANY PARTICULAR ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE GOF.
THE LEFT'S INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND ITS NATIONALIZATIONS,
WHICH ARE NEARLY CERTAIN TO BE IMPLEMENTED EARLY
ON, COULD HAVE IMPORTANT NEGATIVE AFFECTS ON THE
BILATERAL BUSINESS AND INVESTMENT CLIMATE.

8. THE OTHER ISSUES NOTED BELOW WILL BE ISSUES
WHOEVER IS IN POWER, ALTHOUGH NATURALLY THEIR
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CHARACTER AND INTENSITY WILL BE GREATLY AFFECTED
BY THE QUESTION OF WHO'S IN CHARGE.

- TRADE. WITH A GOVERNMENT OF THE CURRENT
MAJORITY, WE WOULD HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME ACHIEVING
IN MTN THE DEGREE OF TRADE LIBERALIZATION THAT WE

WANT. WITH A LEFT GOVERNMENT, THE TASK COULD BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT, SINCE THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE TEMPTED TO TAKE A "TEMPORARY" PROTECTIONIST STANCE AS IT SOUGHT TO RESTRUCTURE THE FRENCH ECONOMY. THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY MIGHT WELL ACCOMMODATE FRENCH DESIRES OR ACTIONS (ARTICLES 108 AND 109 OF THE ROME TREATY) TO AVOID A COMMUNITY CRISIS. THE US WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO RELY ON THE EC INSTITUTIONS AS THE PRIMARY PROTECTION FOR US COMMERCIAL OR ECONOMIC INTERESTS THAT MAY BE THREATENED BY A LEFT REACTION TO A DETERIORATING BALANCE OF PAYMENTS SITUATION. PROTECTIONIST MEASURES INTRODUCED BY EITHER PARTY COULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON US EXPORTS TO FRANCE AND MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO MEET COUNTRY COMMERCIAL PROGRAM OBJECTIVES. EFFORTS TO RESTRUCTURE THE FRENCH INDUSTRY CONCENTRATING ON DEVELOPMENT OF THE HIGH TECHNOLOGY SECTOR COULD LEAD TO INCREASED PROTECTIONISM IN THE AREA WHERE US SALES PROSPECTS ARE STRONGEST.

- CONCORDE. THERE MAY BE FUTURE PROBLEMS, BUT WE DO NOT EXPECT THEM TO BE OF THE INTENSITY OR

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EMOTION OF THE RECENT PAST. THE PS FOR EMPLOYMENT AND ELECTORAL REASONS IN THE TOULOUSE AREA IS LIKELY TO BE AS STRONG A DEFENDER OF AIRCRAFT INTERESTS AS THE PRESENT MAJORITY.

- SALT. ANY POST-ELECTION FRENCH GOVERNMENT WOULD FAVOR THE SALT PROCESS, BUT ALSO WOULD BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMPLICATIONS OF SALT II AND SALT III FOR THE FRENCH DETERRENT. WHILE THE PS IS A LATECOMER TO A DEFENSE OF THE FORCE DE FRAPPE, WE WOULD EXPECT IT IN SALT CONSULTATIONS TO SHOW THE SAME CONCERNS AS THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT TOWARD PROTECTING IT.

- NON-PROLIFERATION. IF THE FRENCH-PAKISTAN DEAL DOES NOT BREAK UP BECAUSE OF EVENTS ALREADY IN TRAIN, WE WILL HAVE TO TRY TO PERSUADE A POST-ELECTION GOVERNMENT TO DECLARE IT DEAD. WE CAN EXPECT DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS WITH EURATOM REGARDING REVISIONS OF THE US-EURATOM SUPPLY AGREEMENT; FRANCE WILL NEITHER ACCEPT US VETO RIGHTS OVER REPROCESSING OF US-SUPPLIED OR ENRICHED FUEL NOR RESTRICTIONS ON THE FLOW OF NUCLEAR MATERIALS WITHIN

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THE COMMON MARKET. FINALLY, IN THE INFCE CONTEXT FRANCE IS PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE STRICTER SAFEGUARDS PROBABLY INCLUDING ADOPTION OF FULL-SCOPE SAFEGUARDS, BUT WILL TAKE A POSITION ON THE EDGE OF CONSENSUS OF SUPPLIERS TO OFFER THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE FOR EXPORT SALES AND SERVICES. ON ALL THESE ISSUES THE PS HAS YET TO STATE A CLEAR POSITION; WE MIGHT HAVE AN EASIER TIME DEALING WITH A LEFT GOVERNMENT THAN WITH ONE CONTAINING GAULLISTS.

- COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN. THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ADHERE TO A CTB FOR AT LEAST FIVE AND MORE PROBABLY 10 YEARS. A LEFT GOVERNMENT MIGHT MOVE MORE QUICKLY TOWARD CESSATION OF TESTING.

- CONVENTIONAL ARMS TRANSFERS. WE WOULD PROBABLY FIND A LEFT GOVERNMENT MARGINALLY MORE SYMPATHETIC TO OUR VIEWS; BUT THE ODDS ARE AGAINST ANY MEANINGFUL FRENCH ACTION, WHOEVER IS IN POWER.

- NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES. FRENCH RHETORIC IN FAVOR OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES WILL OUTSTRIP PERFORMANCE IN ANY POST-ELECTORAL SCENARIO, BUT LEFT RHETORIC WOULD BE FAR MORE IDEOLOGICAL AND CRITICAL OF THE US. A LEFT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE LIKELY TO MAKE A MAJOR INITIATIVE OUT OF NORTH-SOUTH ISSUES, THE PS, FOR EXAMPLE, IS COMMITTED TO RAISING FRENCH DEVELOPMENT AID TO 0.7 PERCENT OF GNP. WE COULD EXPECT TO SEE A LEFT GOVERNMENT DIVERGE FROM US ON

SUCH ISSUES AS THE COMMON FUND, DEBT RELIEF, THE
ROLE OF THE MULTINATIONALS, FLOWS OF INVESTMENT AND
TECHNOLOGY, ETC. THE CLOSE COLLABORATION BETWEEN
FRANCE AND THE US IN PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO THE
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SAHEL AND TO OTHER FRANCOPHONE AFRICAN COUNTRIES,
WHICH HAS BEEN BROADENED AND DEEPEMED IN RECENT
YEARS, COULD ALSO BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED BY EXTREME
LEFT (OR RIGHT) INFLUENCES.

- MIDDLE EAST. WE WOULD RATE THE FRENCH
POTENTIAL FOR EXERTING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON
MIDDLE EAST DEVELOPMENTS AS LOW, WHATEVER THE
ELECTION OUTCOME. A SOCIALIST-DOMINATED GOVERNMENT
WOULD PROBABLY MAKE A SERIOUS EFFORT TO REPAIR
RELATIONS WITH ISAREL, BUT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION
WOULD SET AN IDEOLOGICAL LIMIT TO A SHIFT IN
THIS DIRECTION.

- AFRICA. A LEFT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE LESS
DISTURBED BY A SOVIET-CUBAN THREAT IN AFRICA THAN
A SUCCESSOR TO THE CURRENT MAJORITY. INDEED, THE
COMMUNIST ARE ON RECORD AS CONDONING THE CUBAN
PRESENCE IN ANGOLA. THE CURRENT FRENCH POLICY OF
LIMITED INTERVENTION (E.G. ZAIRE, MAURITANIA) WHICH
HAS HAD A STABILIZING EFFECT WOULD BE ABANDONED, AT
LEAST INITIALLY. COOPERATION ON ISSUES WITH A LARGE
EAST-WEST CONTENT (E.G. THE HORN) WOULD BE DIFFICULT
THOUGH THE FRENCH MIGHT BE EASIER TO DEAL WITH ON
SOUTHERN AFRICA PROBLEMS. THERE COULD BE MORE OF A
PS TILT TOWARD ALGERIA AND AWAY FROM MOROCCO.

IV. GENERAL COURSES OF ACTION TO FOLLOW

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9. OUR PRE-ELECTION POSTURE SHOULD BE LOW. A STATEMENT OF THE TYPE ISSUED WITH REGARD TO ITALY WOULD BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE IF APPLIED DIRECTLY TO FRANCE; IT WOULD INJECT THE US INTO THE MIDDLE OF THE CAMPAIGN AND DAMAGE OUR RELATIONS WITH ALL THE FRENCH PARTIES AND WITH GISCARD HIMSELF. THE ITALIAN STATEMENT HAS HAD THE BENEFICIAL EFFECT IN FRANCE OF MAKING CLEAR WHERE WE STAND; WE SHOULD LEAVE IT AT THAT.

10. IF THE CURRENT GOVERNMENT COALITION WINS THE ELECTION, IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE THE BASIC POLICY LINES WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT IN US-FRENCH RELATIONS OVER THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS. IT WOULD ALSO BE ADVISABLE, IN THE CASE OF A DEFEAT OF THE LEFT, TO KEEP CLOSE CONTACTS WITH THE PS AND TO ENCOURAGE OTHERS (E.G., THE SPD, THE BRITISH LABOR PARTY) TO MAINTAIN SUPPORT FOR THE PS AND TO TRY TO INFLUENCE IT AWAY FROM EXTREME POSITIONS AND ALLIANCE WITH THE PCF. IT IS IN THE US INTEREST TO HAVE A STRONG, INDEPENDENT PS ON THE FRENCH LEFT; PS COLLAPSE
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COULD OPEN THE WAY FOR PCF AND OTHER LEFTIST ADVANCES UNPRECEDENTED IN THE POSTWAR PERIOD. WE SHOULD ACCORDINGLY BE SYMPATHETIC TO ANY EFFORTS BY GISCARD TO MOVE HIS MAJORITY TOWARD ACCEPTANCE OF THE PS IN A BROADENED GOVERNMENT.

11. IF THE LEFT WINS, OUR ATTITUDE WILL OBVIOUSLY HAVE TO VARY ACCORDING TO WHETHER THERE ARE COMMUNISTS IN THE GOVERNMENT OR WHETHER THE SOCIALISTS CAN GOVERN WITHOUT THEM. IN EITHER CASE, WE SHOULD MAINTAIN THE CLOSEST POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP WITH GISCARD AS THE MAJOR ELEMENT OF CONTINUITY AND STABILITY IN FRENCH DEMOCRACY; THIS WILL INVOLVE A

SYMPATHETIC UNDERSTANDING OF HIS POLITICAL PROBLEMS
AND PERHAPS AT TIMES A WILLINGNESS TO PULL OUR
PUNCHES SO AS NOT TO WEAKEN HIS POSITION.

12. A MINORITY SOCIALIST GOVERNMENT WOULD BE
HIGHLY UNSTABLE FOR REASONS NOTED EARLIER. WE
SHOULD NOT ATTEMPT TO INCREASE ITS INSTABILITY.
MOREOVER, OUR GUESS IS THAT FRANCE'S NEIGHBORS,
ESPECIALLY THE UK AND FRG, WOULD ALSO BE ANXIOUS NOT
TO COMPLICATE THE NEW GOVERNMENT'S PROBLEMS. IT
IS IN OUR INTEREST TO NUDGE THE PS, MANY OF WHOSE
LEADERS ARE INTELLIGENT AND FLEXIBLE, TOWARD THE
MAINSTREAM OF WESTERN EUROPEAN SOCIAL DEMOCRACY,
ALONG GERMAN OR BRITISH LINES. WHILE THERE ARE
MAJOR HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL OBSTACLES TO SUCH
AN EVOLUTION, IT IS NOT IMPOSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY AS
THE SOCIALISTS CONFRONT THE BINDING CONSTRAINTS AND
DIFFICULT CHOICES OF THE SORT WHICH HAVE FACED
OTHER EUROPEAN PARTIES IN POWER. THE US GOVERNMENT,
AND THIS EMBASSY (ALONG WITH FRANCE'S EUROPEAN
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PARTNERS), CAN PLAY A VALUABLE EDUCATIVE ROLE IN
PRESSING THE PS TO A BETTER RECOGNITION OF THE
REALITIES. CLOSE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS, ALWAYS
IMPORTANT WITH A COUNTRY AS SENSITIVE AND NATIONAL-
ISTIC AS FRANCE, WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE IMPORTANT
WITH A PS GOVERNMENT (ALBEIT MORE DIFFICULT).
WE SHOULD BE PREPARED TO LIVE WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT
OF DISTANCING AND EVEN CRITICISM OF US POLICIES WHICH
THE PS, FOR DOMESTIC REASONS, MAY FEEL A NEED TO
INDULGE IN. WE SHOULD FIRMLY DEFEND US INTERESTS
AND POSITIONS - BUT IN A NON-POLEMICAL WAY.
WHATEVER THE ELECTION OUTCOME WE WOULD RECOMMEND AN
INCREASED CULTURAL AND INFORMATION PROGRAM.

13. IN THE WORST-CASE HYPOTHESIS - A GOVERNMENT OF
THE LEFT WITH PARTICIPATION OF COMMUNISTS - OUR
STANCE SHOULD BE SKEPTICAL, EMPHASIZING OUR OWN
BASIC INTERESTS AND THE FACTUAL UNWORKABILITY OF THE
PROGRAMS PROPOSED FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF GENERAL
WESTERN INTEREST. A LEFT COALITION VICTORY WOULD
MEAN THAT A MAJORITY OF THE FRENCH ELECTORATE, IN A
FREE ELECTION, HAD REGISTERED DISSATISFACTION WITH
THE CURRENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION IN
FRANCE AND HAD DEMANDED A NEW SET OF LEADERS. IN
THE FACE OF SUCH A VERDICT OVERT PUBLIC HOSTILITY
ON THE PART OF THE US TOWARD THE NEW GOVERNMENT
COULD CREATE A BACKLASH THAT WOULD DAMAGE THE PRO-
SPECT OF CLOSE BILATERAL RELATIONS FOR YEARS TO COME.

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WE SHOULD, HOWEVER, BE PREPARED TO TAKE A COOL STANCE, PUTTING THE ONUS ON THE LEFT GOVERNMENT TO PROVE ITSELF COMMITTED - IN SPECIFIC WAYS - TO ITS RHETORICAL PLEDGES TO MAINTAIN ATLANTIC SOLIDARITY, EUROPEAN UNITY, AND A CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH FRANCE'S MAJOR PARTNERS. IF THESE TESTS ARE NOT MET, THE FAILURE SHOULD BE SEEN TO BE CLEARLY AT THE DOOR OF FRENCH GOVERNMENT, NOT OF OUTSIDE FORCES. IN THIS EFFORT, WE WILL HAVE TO BE PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE TO THE ATTITUDE OF THE GERMANS, THE BRITISH AND OTHER EC MEMBERS. IN EFFECT, WE SHOULD LET THEM TAKE A LEAD SINCE THEIR INTERESTS WILL INEVITABLY BE MORE FUNDAMENTALLY AFFECTED.

14. OBVIOUSLY IT IS EASIER TO DESCRIBE SUCH A POLICY THAN TO PURSUE IT. CHOICES COULD BE FORCED ON US VERY EARLY. WE WOULD CERTAINLY HAVE TO TAKE A SKEPTICAL LOOK AT THE LIMITED BILATERAL DEFENSE COOPERATION WE NOW CARRY ON. A FRENCH REQUEST FOR A STAND-BY IMF CREDIT, WHILE NOT REQUIRING DIRECT US ACTION, COULD MAKE IT NECESSARY FOR US TO TAKE A STAND ON HOW THE FRENCH ECONOMY WAS BEING MANAGED. IN GENERAL OUR
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APPROACH TO A PS-PC COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD BE GEARED TO LEAVING OPEN INDUCEMENTS TO THE SOCIALISTS TO BREAK WITH THE COMMUNISTS. GISCARD WOULD BE LIKELY TO TAKE THE SAME TACK.

15. THE INHERENT INSTABILITIES IN A PS-PC COALITION, COMBINED WITH INTRACTABLE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN FRANCE AND INTERNATIONALLY, MAKE IT PROBABLE THAT SUCH A LEFT GOVERNMENT WOULD BE SHORT-LIVED. IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES, POLITICAL CONSTELLATIONS WHICH ARE NOW IMPROBABLE COULD BECOME POSSIBILITIES, E.G. A CENTER-LEFT. ALTERNATIVELY (OR PERHAPS IN ADDITION) A NEW ELECTION (WHICH WE WOULD REGARD AS LIKELY WITHIN A YEAR) COULD INCREASE THE PROSPECTS FOR A RETURN TO VIABLE NON-COMMUNIST-PARTICIPATION GOVERNMENT IN FRANCE.

16. THIS CABLE WAS APPROVED IN DRAFT BY THE AMBASSADOR. MYERSON

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, BRIEFING MATERIALS, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PARIS05059
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: ST IS AN HR ALSO
Executive Order: X3
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780072-0492
Format: TEL
From: PARIS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780247/aaaabnhy.tel
Line Count: 678
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Litigation History:
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Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 13
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Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS, ONLY
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
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Review Release Date: n/a
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Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3572277
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: FRANCE 1978
TAGS: PGOV, PEPR, FR, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/257647d5-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
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